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SUBJECT: WFP'S COLLABORATION WITH UNHCR IN PROVIDING FOOD ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES IN TANZANIA JOINT MISSION ASSESSMENT

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SUMMARY

1. John Brooks, Project Budget Specialist, U.S. Mission to the UN Agencies for Food and Agriculture (FODAG), and Mary Margaret Knudson, Refugee Officer, U.S. State Department's Office of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM), conducted a joint assessment of the collaboration between the World Food Program (WFP) and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) regarding the delivery of food aid to refugees in western Tanzania, August 28 September 2, 2003. Tanzania hosts the world's largest refugee population, nearly 500,000. Reduced food rations, under-resourced income-generating activities, refugee movement and land restrictions by the Government of Tanzania (GOT) have worked together to create a challenging situation for refugees. Furthermore, questionable refugee population figures could leave some WFP food aid donors with a stomachache. End Summary.

TANZANIA'S REFUGEE POPULATION

2. More refugees reside in Tanzania than in any other country in Africa. According to figures from WFP and UNHCR, Tanzania hosts nearly 500,000 refugees in camps with an estimated 300,000 to 500,000 additional refugees integrated locally. This represents a slight decrease in the overall refugee population receiving international assistance in organized camps. As recently as August 2003, UNHCR reported that Tanzania was hosting over 1,000,000 refugees, with approximately 513,000 in camps.

3. The majority of refugees in Western Tanzania are from Burundi (340,850), while the remaining refugees are from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (149,788), Somalia (3250), Rwanda and other countries.

GOT MEASURES TO ACCOMMODATE REFUGEES

4. Unlike in Uganda (Ref A), the GOT and many of the communities that surround the country's refugee camps have grown less welcoming and tolerant of the refugees within their borders in recent years. Mission met with a number of district-level GOT representatives who made clear that refugees were to be seen as temporary asylum seekers and not as candidates for integration into Tanzanian communities. Some GOT officials blamed refugees for an increase in crime in the refugee-affected areas.

5. In response to the rise in crime, the GOT suspended its four-kilometer rule, which had allowed refugees to engage in cultivation and other activities within a four-kilometer radius of their camps. This rule was first suspended in Kasulu district in early March 2003. The level of enforcement of this suspension varies from district to district. For example, it has been more strictly enforced in the Kigoma and Kibondo areas. As a result, refugees have become increasingly dependent on the food assistance they receive from WFP because they cannot travel outside the camp to participate in income-generating activities or work on neighboring farms.

6. The GOT is also much less generous than the Government of Uganda (GOU)(Ref A) with the amount of agricultural land it allots to refugees. According to WFP, in 1998, the land that the GOT had earlier allocated for refugees' agricultural activities outside the camps was reduced by 45 percent. Therefore, most of the camps remained only with

the four-kilometer outside perimeter -- most of which land was already in use by local Tanzanian villages -- and kitchen gardens. These kitchen gardens vary in size from 7.5 meters by 15 meters to 40 meters by 50 meters. In some

camps, there are plots of land for common agricultural activities. This makes it more difficult for them to grow their own food with which to supplement WFP rations.

REFUGEE FOOD RATIONS

17. Before the 2000 Joint Assessment Mission (JAM), refugee food rations were at 1991 kcal per person, per day. Following the 2000 JAM, rations were reduced to 1857 kcal. This level was determined because the evaluators felt that the refugees could supplement their ration with farming and other coping mechanisms. In addition, the donors felt strongly for the reduction as a component of an envisioned self-reliance strategy for the refugees. This recommendation went into effect in August 2001.

18. In February 2003, WFP was forced to cut refugee food rations in Tanzania due to a break in the pipeline. Between February and April 2003, maize was being distributed at 50 percent of the full ration ("full ration" in Tanzania is 1857 kcal per person, per day). It then went up to 72 percent until July 2003, when it was increased to 100 percent. As recently as June 2003, pulses and corn-soy blend (CSB) were being distributed at 75 percent of the full ration, while vegetable oil was being distributed at 50 percent (Ref B).

19. WFP's appeal for assistance from the international donor community led to contributions of both cash and in-kind commodities. The USG contributed 44,860 MT of food valued at approximately USD 23.2 million and USD 4.4 million in cash, the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) contributed 10 million Euro, while Europe Aid contributed an additional 10 million Euro.

110. These contributions facilitated WFP's recent move to raise the vegetable oil ration to 100 percent as of September 2003. WFP intends to increase the CSB and pulses rations to 100 percent as of the beginning of October 2003.

111. WFP reports that its current pipeline insures full-ration distributions through July 2004. If new commitments are not received by February 2004, however, WFP foresees future pipeline breaks.

112. Refugees anecdotally reported that decreases in rations contribute to increased cases of refugee girls trading sex for grain milling costs, school fees or food. Refugees generally said that the only food they eat comes from WFP. They reported not having additional sources of income with which to supplement their rations. Refugees also indicated that they exchanged WFP commodities for non-food items, including pots and cooking utensils.

INCOME-GENERATING ACTIVITIES

113. Refugees are engaged in a number of income-generating activities sponsored by UNHCR and designed to decrease their dependence on food assistance. These activities include basket weaving, soap production and raising poultry.

114. These activities appear to be having limited success. Due to the movement restrictions imposed by the GOT and the lack of a market outside of the immediate area of the camps, many of these activities have little chance of achieving profitability or expansion. For example, the only revenue generated by a basket-weaving initiative came from the charitable contributions of government, UN and donor-government officials who were visiting the camps. Indeed, during our visit we were encouraged to buy something in support of the initiative. A number of these projects do not make enough money to cover their production costs.

115. The inevitable weakness of these projects and other coping mechanisms is further reinforced by the fact that GOT does not support them because they fear that they could

lead to local integration, something that the GOT wishes to discourage. For example, suspension of the four-kilometer rule prevents refugees from working on the land of local Tanzanian farmers.

116. Each year WFP and UNHCR conduct joint food assessments of refugee camps in Tanzania. This year's assessment covered a wider range of issues, not just food security, and was done June 16-26, 2003.

117. Among its findings was recognition that the refugee ration level should be increased beyond 1857 kcal per person, per day; the GOT should be encouraged to be more lenient towards the movement of refugees and their interactions with the surrounding communities; and UNHCR should assist refugees in gaining access to wider markets for their handicrafts.

REFUGEE REGISTRATION

118. It is UNHCR's responsibility to register refugees. Refugee registration was last conducted in Tanzania in late 2001, nearly 2 years ago.

119. Some UN field staff believe that the refugee count in camps in Tanzania is inflated. In one instance in particular an interlocutor estimated that the inflation could be as high as 20-30 percent, although this estimate has been called into question and he was not able to offer any concrete evidence.

120. UNHCR/Tanzania will serve as the pilot for a new initiative for registering refugees. This system, known as biometrics, involves retinal scanning and/or fingerprint analysis to identify and register refugees. UNHCR should begin the pilot program within the year.

BUFFER STOCKS: A QUESTION OF TERMINOLOGY?

121. In response to concerns that it was more concerned with replenishing depleted buffer stocks as opposed to providing refugees the full ration (Ref C), WFP responded that it was not sitting on a supply of excess or buffer commodities while refugee food ration levels were less than 100 percent.

122. WFP representatives explained that having a two month buffer stock simply meant that they try to retain a two-month supply in the camps at all times in case of any logistic hiccups that might arise. It is not/not additional in any way. Rather, it is a part of their in-country stocks and an integral part of the food pipeline.

COMMENTS AND OBSERVATIONS

123. Notwithstanding WFP's move to increase refugee food rations above 1857 kcal per person, per day, concerns remain as to whether or not this ration level is adequate. There are those who believe that the current level is adequate, while others advocate that the level should be raised to the international standard, which is 2100 kcal per person, per day.

124. The recent JAM assessment, while supportive of an increase in the current ration level, was inconclusive as to what the appropriate ration level should be.

125. The JAM assessment also found that the fluctuations in the ration level had no impact on the overall malnutrition level of refugees. However, a recent UNHCR/UNICEF nutrition report concludes that ration cuts and government

restrictions on the movements of the refugees contribute to higher levels of malnutrition in the Tanzanian camps.

126. UNCHR was questioned as to why Tanzania was not chosen as a country for the implementation of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between WFP and UNHCR that transfers some responsibilities for refugee feeding from UNHCR to WFP. UNHCR responded that they were hesitant to experiment with such a large refugee population and thought that such a move would weaken their link with the refugees. This rationale appears weak and it is hence recommended that this issue be further reviewed by WFP and UNHCR.

127. Exaggerated figures of the overall refugee population in camps should be of great concern to WFP and the donor community and highlight the need for an updated registration of refugees.

128. Efforts by WFP and UNHCR to encourage the GOT to relax the movement restrictions on refugees should be supported.
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